## **YVCipedia AMPHIBIANS**

African Bullfrog Care Sheet

## **Species Overview**

The **African Bullfrog (*Pyxicephalus adspersus*)**, often called the **Pixie Frog**, is a **large, terrestrial amphibian** native to sub-Saharan Africa. It is famous for its **massive, squat body**, huge mouth, and **powerful predatory behavior**.

Adult males can grow to **7–10 inches in length** and weigh over **2 pounds**, while females are typically much smaller. These frogs are known for their **voracious appetite, strong bite, and aggressive feeding response**.

Despite their size and aggression at feeding time, they can be **hardy, long-lived pets**, often surviving **15–25 years** with proper care.

## **Housing & Environment**

African Bullfrogs are **terrestrial ambush predators** that require a **secure, spacious enclosure** with **ample substrate for burrowing**.

**Minimum enclosure size:**

* Juvenile: 10–20 gallons
* Adult: 30–40 gallon breeder tank or larger
* Floor space is more important than height

**Key enclosure features:**

* Secure lid to prevent escapes
* Deep substrate (4–6+ inches) for burrowing
* Simple layout—avoid sharp décor that could injure their skin
* Moist hides or sphagnum-filled burrows

**Recommended substrates:**

* Coconut fiber (eco earth)
* Organic, pesticide-free topsoil
* Sphagnum moss mixed in burrowing spots
* Avoid gravel or bark chips (impaction risk if swallowed)

**Cleaning guidelines:**

* Spot-clean feces daily or as needed
* Replace substrate fully and disinfect enclosure every 4–6 weeks

## **Heating & Lighting**

African Bullfrogs need **warm, stable temperatures**, mimicking their native savanna environment.

**Temperature range:**

* **Daytime:** 75–85°F
* **Nighttime:** Can drop to 68–72°F
* Avoid prolonged exposure above 88°F (heat stress)

**Heating:**

* Ceramic heat emitters or low-wattage basking bulbs
* Side-mounted heat mats (thermostat-controlled) for gentle ambient warmth
* Avoid direct heat rocks (burn risk)

**Lighting:**

* No intense lighting needed—**they’re nocturnal and burrow during the day**
* **Low-level UVB (2–5%) is optional but beneficial** for calcium metabolism and health
* Provide a **12-hour light/dark cycle** with timers to simulate natural day length

## **Humidity**

African Bullfrogs prefer **moderate humidity** levels of **50–70%**, with **occasional higher spikes** during misting.

**Humidity management tips:**

* Mist the enclosure lightly once daily or as needed
* Include a humid hide with damp sphagnum moss
* Use **digital hygrometers** to monitor levels
* Ensure ventilation to prevent mold or bacterial buildup

They can **burrow to maintain their preferred humidity**, so providing deep, moist substrate is essential.

## **Water & Hydration**

These frogs **absorb water through their skin** and need **consistent access to clean, dechlorinated water**.

**Water guidelines:**

* Provide a **large, shallow water dish** wide enough for soaking
* Change water daily to avoid bacterial contamination
* Always use **dechlorinated or treated water**
* Keep water depth low enough to prevent drowning, especially for juveniles

## **Diet & Feeding**

African Bullfrogs are **opportunistic carnivores** with **strong feeding responses**. They’ll eat almost anything that moves, so **portion control and prey choice are critical** to avoid obesity and impaction.

**Feeding guidelines:**

* Juveniles: Feed **every other day**
* Adults: Feed **2–3 times per week**

**Appropriate prey items:**

* Gut-loaded crickets
* Dubia roaches
* Earthworms (pesticide-free)
* Occasional pinky mice or small rodents (for adults only, sparingly)
* Feeder fish (rarely, and only if safe species are used)

**Feeding tips:**

* Prey should be **appropriately sized** (no wider than the frog’s head)
* Use **tongs** to avoid accidental bites—they have strong jaws!
* Dust insects with **calcium (with D3) 2–3× weekly**
* Provide **multivitamin supplement 1× weekly**
* Avoid fatty prey like waxworms except as occasional treats

Overfeeding is a common problem—these frogs will **continue eating well beyond their needs**.

## **Behavior & Handling**

African Bullfrogs are **solitary, ambush predators** that generally **do not tolerate handling well**.

**Handling recommendations:**

* Best treated as **display animals**—minimal handling is ideal
* If necessary, wet hands with **dechlorinated water** before contact
* Support the entire body gently, avoiding squeezing
* Watch for **defensive lunges and bites**, especially during feeding time

They can deliver **painful bites** due to strong jaws and aggressive feeding behavior.

## **Healthcare & Veterinary Care**

Plan for an **initial veterinary exam** after acquisition and **annual wellness checkups** with a reptile/amphibian-savvy veterinarian.

**Common health issues:**

* Skin infections from poor hygiene or low humidity
* Shedding problems (dysecdysis)
* Impaction (from substrate ingestion or oversized prey)
* Obesity from overfeeding fatty or inappropriate prey
* Parasites, especially in wild-caught individuals

**Warning signs:**

* Lethargy or unresponsiveness
* Persistent refusal to eat
* Abnormal skin lesions or sores
* Difficulty shedding
* Bloating or labored breathing

Prompt veterinary care helps **prevent complications** and improves long-term health.

## **Enrichment & Habitat Design**

African Bullfrogs are **sedentary but benefit from deep, moist burrowing areas** and **secure, naturalistic setups**.

**Enrichment strategies:**

* Deep, diggable substrate for natural burrowing
* Moist hides with sphagnum moss
* Simple décor with varied textures (no sharp edges)
* Occasional rearrangement of substrate and hides to stimulate exploration

A well-designed enclosure **reduces stress** and supports **natural behaviors**.

## **Facts & FAQs**

* Nicknamed **“Pixie Frogs”**—from *Pyxicephalus*, not their temperament!
* Native to **sub-Saharan Africa**, surviving seasonal drought by burrowing into the ground.
* Noted for **extremely strong bite** and aggressive feeding response.
* Males are significantly **larger than females** and may vocalize with deep calls.
* Lifespan of **15–25+ years** in captivity with excellent care.

### **Supplies & Care Checklist**

* Escape-proof glass terrarium (≥30 gallons for adults)
* Low-wattage ceramic heat emitter or heat mat (thermostat-controlled)
* Digital thermometers and hygrometer
* Shallow, stable water dish with dechlorinated water
* Appropriate substrate (coconut fiber, organic topsoil)
* Sphagnum moss for moist hides
* Misting system or spray bottle
* Feeding tongs for safe prey offering
* Gut-loaded feeder insects and occasional small rodents (adult only, sparingly)
* Calcium and multivitamin supplements
* Cleaning supplies and amphibian-safe disinfectants
* Secure carrier for veterinary visits

*Yarmouth Veterinary Center*